

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 COME-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1394
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A O TUNIS 4106

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELBA, SHUM, TS
SUBJ: AMNESTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA

1. IN A FORTY-FIVE MINUTE TALK JUNE 6 WITH HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., SPECIAL ADVISOR TO THE PRESIDENT, HIS FATHER, I OPENED BY EXPRESSING MY PLEASURE ON READING THE PREVIOUS DAY THE LIST OF 422 AMNESTIED PRISONERS. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS NOTHING EXCEPTIONAL ABOUT THE AMNESTY; AMNETIES HAD BEEN GRANTED OFTEN IN THE PAST. THIS LIST, HE ADDED, CONTAINED THE NAMES OF 191 LABOR LEADERS AND UNION MEMBERS, CHIEFLY THOSE WHO HAD COMPLETED ABOUT SIX OR EIGHT MONTHS OF THEIR GENERALLY SHORT SENTENCES. THE BALANCE WERE AN ASSORTED COLLECTION OF CONVICTED FELONS. I TOLD BOURGUIBA JR. THAT IT HAD STRUCK ME AS THE LARGEST AMNESTY IN TUNISIA THAT I COULD RECALL, BUT HE SAID HE THOUGHT THERE HAD BEEN EVEN LARGER ONES IN THE PAST. I ALSO SAID THAT PUBLICATION OF THE AMNESTY SHOULD HELP RESTORE TUNISIA'S
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IMAGE ABROAD IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE.

2. IN THIS CONNECTION, I INFORMED BOURGUIBA JR. THAT TUNISIA HAD BEEN INCLUDED BY THE LONG SUBCOMMITTEE IN A LIST OF 27 RECIPIENTS OF US ASSISTANCE WHOSE OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS HAD AROUSED CRITICISM DURING RECENT BUDGET HEARINGS. HE LAMENTED THAT "TUNISIA'S ENEMIES" WOULD BE

LISTENED TO AT SUCH HEARINGS AND THAT NO ONE WHO KENW
TUNISIA COULD SPEAK UP. I SAID I HAD NOT SEEN A TRANS-
SCRIPT OF THE HEARINGS, DID NOT KNOW WHO THE INTERESTED
PARTIES WERE AND POSSESSED ONLY A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THIS
ASPECT BUT THAT, IN DEFENDING OUR BUDGET SUBMISSIONS, I
FELT SURE THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMEN WERE PREPARED
IN ADVANCE TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS IN TUNISIA INPROPER
PERSPECTIVE. I WARNED HIM, HOWEVER, THAT AMERICAN
HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE TO ASK
TO BE HEARD--AS IS THEIR RIGHT--EACH TIME A BUDGET ITEM
AFFECTING TUNISIA CAME UP. THIS WILL BE A FACT OF LIFE.
I ADDED, AT LEAST UNTIL THE END OF THE TRIALS OF THE UGTT
LEADERSHIP. EACH APPROPRIATION FOR TUNISIA WOULD BE
HARDER TO OBTAIN. I ASKED WHEN HE THOUGHT THE TRIALS
WOULD BE HELD. HE PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW.

3. COMMENT: DETAILED REPORT AND ANALYSIS ON THIS
WEEK'S AMNESTY ARE BEING PREPARED FOR TRANSMITTAL BY
SEPTTEL.
MULCAHY

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